



Teacher Social Competence in Fostering Biblical Friendship Values: A Study of Genesis 26:28-31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli

Dewi Tiolina Siburian

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: dewisiburian24@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of teacher social competence in fostering biblical friendship values based on Genesis 26:28-31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. Grounded in biblical theology and qualitative educational research, the study is based on the premise that teachers' relational abilities play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and internalization of Christian relational ethics. The participants included two Christian Religious Education teachers and a purposive sample of Christian students from different grade levels. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns related to teacher social competence and students' internalization of biblical friendship values. The findings reveal that teacher social competence plays a central role in fostering students' understanding and practice of biblical friendship. Key themes include relational modeling, empathetic communication, and peace-oriented conflict resolution as primary mechanisms through which biblical friendship values were transmitted and embodied. Teachers' integration of Genesis 26:28-31 into everyday relational teaching enabled students to reinterpret friendship not merely as social preference but as a commitment to peace, respect, and reconciliation. The study also highlights that teacher social competence contributes to shaping a broader school culture that supports relational ethics and Christian character formation. Despite contextual challenges such as large class sizes and external social influences, the findings affirm that socially competent teachers serve as vital mediators between biblical narratives and students' lived relational experiences. This study contributes to Christian education scholarship by demonstrating that teacher social competence is a key dimension of holistic pedagogy that supports meaningful and transformative friendship formation among students.

Keywords: Social Competence, Christian Religious Education, Friendship

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education increasingly recognizes that effective teaching is not solely determined by pedagogical and professional skills, but also by teachers' social competence, particularly in fostering healthy relationships and positive social values among students. In school contexts, teachers are not only transmitters of academic

knowledge but also key social agents who shape students' interpersonal attitudes, communication patterns, and relational ethics. This dimension is especially significant in Christian Religious Education (CRE), where relational values are deeply rooted in biblical teachings and are integral to holistic spiritual and moral formation (Knight, 2006; Wolterstorff, 2004). Social competence is commonly defined as a teacher's ability to communicate effectively, build positive relationships, demonstrate empathy, manage social interactions, and model constructive interpersonal behavior within the school community (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Mulyasa, 2013). Teachers who possess strong social competence are more likely to create supportive classroom climates, encourage mutual respect, and foster cooperative learning environments. Research in educational psychology further suggests that students learn social values not only through formal instruction but also through observation of teachers' daily interactions and relational practices (Bandura, 1986). Thus, teacher social competence plays a critical role in shaping students' understanding of friendship, trust, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Friendship is not merely a social construct but also a theological and ethical value grounded in Scripture. The Bible consistently portrays relationships as central to human life and spiritual growth, emphasizing peace, mutual respect, covenantal commitment, and reconciliation (Wright, 2004). In Genesis 26:28-31, the narrative of Isaac and Abimelech presents a significant biblical model of relational restoration and covenantal friendship. Despite prior conflict and tension, the two parties choose to pursue peace, mutual recognition, and a formal agreement that reflects respect and a desire for harmonious coexistence. Old Testament scholarship highlights this passage as an example of conflict resolution, covenant-making, and the pursuit of peaceful relationships grounded in recognition of God's presence and blessing (Wenham, 1994; Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000).

This biblical account provides a meaningful theological framework for understanding friendship not simply as emotional closeness but as a value rooted in reconciliation, mutual respect, and shared commitment to peace. In Christian education, such a framework offers rich pedagogical potential for guiding students to interpret friendship in light of biblical principles, rather than merely social or cultural norms. The role of the CRE teacher is therefore crucial in translating biblical narratives like Genesis 26:28-31 into concrete relational values that students can understand, internalize, and practice in their daily interactions. Exemplary teaching and modeling are widely recognized as powerful mechanisms for value formation. Bandura's (1986) social learning theory emphasizes that individuals acquire attitudes and behaviors through observing significant role models. In the context of CRE, teachers function as primary role models whose relational styles, communication patterns, and conflict management strategies are closely observed by students. Groome (2011) argues that Christian education is inherently relational and dialogical, requiring teachers to embody the values they seek to teach. Consequently, social competence is not an optional or peripheral aspect of Christian teaching, but a central dimension of pedagogical effectiveness in fostering biblical values such as friendship, peace, and reconciliation. Teacher social competence is formally recognized as one of the core domains of teacher competency, alongside pedagogical, professional, and personal competencies (Mulyasa, 2013). This policy framework underscores the expectation that teachers demonstrate maturity, effective communication, respect for

diversity, and the ability to build constructive relationships with students, colleagues, and the wider community. For CRE teachers, these expectations carry additional theological significance, as their social interactions are expected to reflect Christian virtues and biblical relational ethics. At UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli, where there are 465 Christian students and 2 CRE teachers, the school environment represents an important social and spiritual context in which students learn not only academic content but also relational values. In such a large student population, the social influence of teachers becomes even more significant, as teachers' relational practices can shape school culture and students' perceptions of friendship and interpersonal conduct. However, many empirical studies on teacher competence tend to focus primarily on pedagogical or professional dimensions, with relatively limited attention given to how teacher social competence contributes to the formation of specific biblical values such as friendship. This gap highlights the need for research that explicitly integrates biblical narratives with educational and social competence frameworks. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of teacher social competence in fostering biblical friendship values based on Genesis 26:28-31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. By integrating biblical theology, social learning theory, and educational competence frameworks, this study seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of Christian pedagogy, emphasizing that friendship formation is not merely a social outcome but a spiritually and biblically grounded educational process shaped significantly by teachers' social competence.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the role of teacher social competence in fostering biblical friendship values based on Genesis 26:28-31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. A qualitative approach was selected in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how social competence is enacted in everyday teaching practices and how biblical friendship values are interpreted, modeled, and experienced within the school context. This design is appropriate for capturing participants' perspectives, meanings, and lived experiences related to relational values and teacher-student interactions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research site was UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli, a junior high school with a large Christian student population. At the time of the study, the school had approximately 465 Christian students and 2 Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers who were responsible for delivering religious instruction and guiding students' spiritual and moral development. The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. The primary participants included the two CRE teachers, while a group of Christian students from different grade levels were selected as student informants to provide diverse perspectives on teacher social competence and friendship-related learning experiences. Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to enhance depth and credibility. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two CRE teachers to explore their understanding of social competence, their pedagogical strategies for teaching Genesis 26:28-31, and their approaches to modeling friendship, reconciliation, and peaceful relationships in the classroom and school environment. The interviews were guided by an interview protocol but allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and reflections. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with selected groups of Christian

students. These FGDs were designed to elicit students' perceptions of how their teachers demonstrated social competence, how biblical teachings on friendship were explained, and how these teachings influenced their own understanding and practice of friendship. FGDs were chosen to encourage interaction among participants and to capture shared meanings and collective experiences related to friendship and teacher–student relationships (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Classroom observations were carried out during Christian Religious Education lessons in which Genesis 26:28-31 and related relational themes were taught. The observations focused on teachers' communication styles, interpersonal interactions, conflict management approaches, and the ways in which teachers modeled friendship and respectful relationships. Field notes were taken to document observable behaviors, classroom dynamics, and relational patterns that reflected teacher social competence in practice. This analysis aimed to identify how friendship, peace, and relational values were formally articulated in the curriculum and how they aligned with the biblical framework of Genesis 26:28-31.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the qualitative findings of the study on teacher social competence in fostering biblical friendship values based on Genesis 26:28-31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. The findings are organized into major themes that emerged from interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. These themes reflect how teacher social competence is enacted in practice and how it contributes to students' understanding and internalization of biblical friendship values, including peace-making, reconciliation, mutual respect, and covenantal commitment. One dominant theme that emerged from interviews with the CRE teachers was a holistic understanding of social competence as an integration of communication skills, emotional sensitivity, relational modeling, and biblical values. Both teachers described social competence not merely as the ability to manage classroom interactions, but as a spiritual and moral responsibility to embody Christlike relational attitudes in daily school life. Teachers consistently emphasized that friendship, from a biblical perspective, is not limited to emotional closeness but includes ethical dimensions such as trust, honesty, peace, and mutual respect. In their reflections, Genesis 26:28-31 was interpreted as a narrative of restored relationships and intentional peace-making. Teachers explained that Isaac's willingness to enter into a covenant with Abimelech, despite prior conflict, serves as a powerful model of mature relational ethics grounded in recognition of God's work and blessing. This theological interpretation shaped how teachers understood their own social roles. They viewed themselves as facilitators of peace and relational harmony within the school environment. This finding suggests that teacher social competence is not perceived merely as a technical competency but as a value-laden and spiritually informed disposition that directly influences how biblical friendship is framed and taught. From a discussion perspective, this aligns with Christian education theory, which emphasizes that teachers' identities and values significantly shape their pedagogical and relational practices. The teachers' understanding reflects a view of social competence as a form of lived theology, where biblical narratives inform everyday relational behavior. This reinforces the idea that in Christian education, social competence cannot be separated from spiritual formation and theological reflection.

The next major theme was the central role of relational modeling. Across interviews, FGDs, and observations, students consistently reported that they learned more about friendship from how teachers treated others than from verbal explanations alone. Teachers' ways of speaking, listening, responding to conflict, and showing respect were frequently cited as concrete examples that shaped students' understanding of biblical friendship. Classroom observations revealed that teachers regularly demonstrated respectful communication, patient listening, and calm responses to student misbehavior or interpersonal conflict. In several observed lessons, teachers explicitly connected these relational behaviors to biblical teachings, including Genesis 26:28-31, by highlighting the importance of choosing peace over hostility and dialogue over confrontation. Students in focus groups often described their teachers as role models of fairness and empathy. They noted that teachers made efforts to listen to students' concerns, encouraged reconciliation when conflicts arose, and avoided favoritism. These relational practices were interpreted by students as expressions of biblical friendship values. This indicates that modeling functions as a powerful pedagogical tool for value formation, consistent with social learning theory. This finding underscores the importance of congruence between teaching and living. When teachers' relational behaviors align with biblical teachings, students are more likely to perceive friendship values as authentic and attainable. This supports the broader Christian education perspective that values are most effectively transmitted through embodied practice rather than abstract instruction alone. Another prominent theme was the role of communication and empathy as core components of teacher social competence. Students frequently highlighted that teachers who communicated respectfully and empathetically made them feel valued and understood. This relational climate, in turn, created a supportive environment for learning about friendship and relational ethics. Teachers reported that they intentionally practiced empathetic listening, particularly when students experienced interpersonal problems with peers. In such situations, teachers described their role as mediators who seek to understand all sides of a conflict and guide students toward peaceful resolution. This practice reflects the biblical emphasis on peace-making and reconciliation as modeled in Genesis 26:28-31. Observational data further confirmed that teachers used inclusive language, encouraged student participation, and avoided harsh or humiliating communication styles. These practices contributed to a classroom atmosphere characterized by psychological safety and mutual respect. Students reported that such an environment made it easier for them to discuss relational issues openly and to reflect on how biblical teachings apply to their friendships. From a discussion standpoint, these findings highlight communication and empathy as essential dimensions of social competence that directly support the internalization of biblical friendship values. Empathetic teacher–student relationships create a relational context in which students can experience, not just learn about, the principles of respect, understanding, and peace. Teachers and students alike described conflict as a common aspect of school life, especially in a large student population such as at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. How teachers responded to conflict was seen as a key indicator of their social competence and a practical expression of biblical friendship values.

Teachers described using conflict situations as teachable moments. Rather than simply imposing disciplinary measures, they often facilitated dialogue between students,

encouraged mutual apology, and guided students to reflect on biblical principles of forgiveness and peace. Genesis 26:28-31 was sometimes referenced explicitly as a model of choosing peace and establishing renewed relationships after conflict. Students reported that such approaches helped them to see conflict not only as a problem but as an opportunity for growth in friendship and character. They described learning that true friendship involves responsibility, humility, and willingness to restore relationships. This suggests that conflict resolution practices functioned as a powerful context for internalizing biblical friendship values. In discussion, this theme highlights the formative potential of conflict when guided by socially competent teachers. Rather than undermining friendship, conflict, when handled with empathy and biblical wisdom, can strengthen students' understanding of reconciliation and peace as central elements of Christian relational ethics. Another important theme was the integration of Genesis 26:28-31 into relational learning. Teachers did not treat the biblical text merely as historical or theological content but as a practical framework for understanding everyday relationships. They emphasized key elements of the narrative, such as recognition of God's presence, mutual respect, and covenantal agreement, and connected these to students' experiences of friendship. Students reported that lessons on this passage helped them to reinterpret friendship in more ethical and spiritual terms. Friendship was no longer seen only as choosing people who are fun or similar, but also as a commitment to peace, honesty, and mutual responsibility. This suggests that biblical narrative functioned as a moral and spiritual lens through which students evaluated their own relationships. From a discussion perspective, this finding supports the view that biblical integration is most effective when it is contextualized within students' lived experiences. Teacher social competence played a crucial role in bridging the gap between ancient biblical narratives and contemporary adolescent relationships.

The findings also point to the broader influence of teacher social competence on school culture. With only two CRE teachers serving a large Christian student population, their relational practices had a disproportionate impact on how friendship and interpersonal ethics were perceived within the school. Teachers' consistent emphasis on respect, peace, and reconciliation contributed to a school climate where relational values were taken seriously. Students noted that the attitudes modeled by CRE teachers often influenced how they interacted not only in CRE classes but also in other school contexts. This suggests that teacher social competence has a ripple effect that extends beyond the immediate classroom. This highlights the strategic importance of socially competent teachers in shaping school culture. Especially in contexts with limited numbers of CRE teachers, their relational influence becomes a key factor in the overall moral and spiritual tone of the school. A central outcome theme was students' reported internalization of biblical friendship values. Through FGDs, students articulated changes in how they understood and practiced friendship. Many described becoming more aware of the importance of forgiveness, peaceful communication, and respect for differences. Some students explicitly linked these changes to teachers' examples and to lessons on Genesis 26:28-31.

This internalization was evident not only at the cognitive level (understanding biblical concepts) but also at the behavioral and attitudinal levels. Students described efforts to avoid unnecessary conflict, to apologize when wrong, and to maintain friendships even when disagreements occurred. These reported changes suggest that teacher social competence contributed to holistic value formation. This supports the conclusion that friendship formation in Christian education is not merely informational but transformational. When teachers combine biblical teaching with socially competent relational practices, students are more likely to internalize friendship values as part of their character and daily behavior. These included large class sizes, time constraints, and diverse student backgrounds. With a large number of students, providing individualized relational guidance was sometimes difficult. Teachers acknowledged that while they sought to model and teach friendship values, structural and contextual factors sometimes limited the depth of personal engagement. Students also noted that peer pressure and external influences, such as social media and broader youth culture, sometimes conflicted with biblical friendship values taught at school. This suggests that teacher social competence operates within a complex social environment where multiple influences shape students' relational attitudes. These challenges highlight the need for institutional support and collaborative efforts among teachers, administrators, and parents to reinforce biblical friendship values. Teacher social competence is crucial, but it is most effective when supported by a broader school and community commitment to relational and moral education. The findings of this study have important theoretical and theological implications. Theoretically, they support social learning perspectives that emphasize modeling and relational interaction as central to value formation. Theologically, they affirm the relevance of Old Testament narratives, such as Genesis 26:28-31, as living resources for Christian character education. The integration of teacher social competence with biblical narrative demonstrates that friendship formation is a spiritually grounded educational process. Teachers serve as mediators between Scripture and students' lived experiences, translating biblical values into relational practices that students can observe, experience, and internalize.

The results demonstrate that teacher social competence plays a vital role in fostering biblical friendship values at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. Through relational modeling, empathetic communication, conflict resolution, and contextualized biblical teaching, teachers significantly shaped students' understanding and practice of friendship. Genesis 26:28-31 functioned not merely as a biblical text but as a living framework for relational ethics, mediated through the socially competent practices of CRE teachers. These findings affirm that in Christian education, social competence is not an optional or secondary skill but a central dimension of effective pedagogy and spiritual formation. Friendship, as a biblical value, is learned most powerfully when it is both taught and embodied by teachers in the daily life of the school.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of teacher social competence in fostering biblical friendship values based on Genesis 26:28–31 at UPT SMP 012 Aeknauli. Using a qualitative research design, the findings demonstrate that teacher social competence is a central factor in

shaping students' understanding and internalization of friendship as a biblical, ethical, and relational value. The study shows that friendship formation in Christian Religious Education is not merely a matter of cognitive learning but is deeply influenced by teachers' relational practices, communication styles, and daily modeling of biblical principles. The results indicate that teachers' holistic understanding of social competence, combined with their integration of biblical narratives into relational teaching, enabled students to interpret friendship in terms of peace, reconciliation, mutual respect, and covenantal commitment. Teachers' consistent modeling of empathetic communication, fair treatment, and peaceful conflict resolution provided concrete examples that helped students translate biblical teachings into lived relational practices. In this way, Genesis 26:28-31 functioned not only as a scriptural text but also as a practical framework for guiding students' interpersonal behavior. The study highlights that teacher social competence contributes not only to individual student development but also to the broader relational culture of the school. In a context with a large Christian student population and a limited number of CRE teachers, the relational influence of socially competent teachers was shown to have a significant impact on how friendship values were perceived and practiced across the school community. This underscores the strategic importance of investing in teachers' social competence as part of holistic Christian education. This study contributes to Christian education scholarship by providing qualitative evidence that teacher social competence is a key mediator between biblical teaching and students' lived relational experiences. It affirms that friendship, as a biblical value grounded in Genesis 26:28-31, is most effectively formed when teachers embody the values they teach, thereby enabling students to experience friendship not only as a concept but as a lived expression of Christian relational ethics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Groome, T. H. (2011). *Will there be faith? A new vision for educating and growing disciples*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy and education: An introduction in Christian perspective* (4th ed.). Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.

- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mulyasa, E. (2013). *Uji kompetensi dan penilaian kinerja guru*. Bandung, Indonesia: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Walton, J. H., Matthews, V. H., & Chavalas, M. W. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Wenham, G. J. (1994). *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2). Dallas, TX: Word Books.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2004). *Educating for life: Reflections on Christian teaching and learning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Wright, C. J. H. (2004). *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.